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FIRST
ANNUAL REPORT

OF THE
VERMONT ANTI-SLAVERY SOCIETY.

PRESENTED AT

MIDDLEBURY, FEBRUARY 18, 1835.

MONTPELIER:
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1835.

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IN EXCHANGE

Bos Athen.
April 06

FIRST ANNUAL MEETING.

THE FIRST ANNUAL MEETING of the Vermont Anti-Slavery Society was holden in Middlebury, on Wednesday, the 18th of February, 1835 ; the President, JOHN IDE, in the chair.

The meeting was attended by a large number of delegates from Auxiliary Societies, and other friends of the cause, from different parts of the State.

The Annual Report was read by the Corresponding Secretary, and ordered to be printed under the direction of the Executive Committee.

In the evening, the Society met at the Congregational meeting-house, where an Address was delivered by Mr. OLIVER JOHNSON, to a numerous and highly respectable audience. The meeting was also addressed by Messrs. Milligan of Ryegate, Knapp of Montpelier, Bills of Bennington, Barber of Middlebury, and others. At the close of the exercises a collection was taken amounting to \$16 12.

The Society voted to request of Mr. Johnson a copy of his Address for publication.

The following preambles and resolutions were adopted during the progress of the meeting.

The following were introduced by Mr. WILSON of Crafts-bury :

Whereas, some of the conductors of the press in this country, by the avidity with which they have detailed those partial irregularities that have occurred under the apprenticeship system adopted in some of the West India Islands, have endeavored to prejudice the community against the propriety of immediate emancipation ;—

And whereas, those editors, instead of charging those acts of irregularity upon the apprenticeship system itself, and upon the oppressive conduct of the planters acting under that system, have attempted to fix the odium of those irregularities both upon the colored race generally and upon the principles of immediate abolition ;—

And whereas, the said editors have studiously refrained from publishing the happy results witnessed in the orderly conduct of the emancipated in those islands in which they were at once liberated from their chains ;—therefore,

1. *Resolved*, That said editors are entitled to all the honor which we know an enlightened people will ere long award to a course of such duplicity.

2. *Resolved*, That said editors, from their conduct in the premises, and from their known attachment to schemes of expatriation, are to be understood with some limitation when they profess their opposition to the sin of slavery and their friendship to the degraded sons of Africa.

3. *Resolved*, That the community be recommended to seek their information on all subjects connected with slavery from more veracious journals than those conducted by the editors above specified.

The following were introduced by Mr. MILLIGAN of Ryegate :

Whereas, certain prominent friends of Colonization have lately formed a Society in Boston, styled the 'American Union for the Relief and Improvement of the Colored Race;' and whereas, Abolitionists were refused any voice in the deliberations of their meeting; and whereas, they refused to call slavery a SIN;—

Resolved, That we have no confidence in said Society as an Abolition Society.

On motion of Mr. BILLS of Bennington,

Resolved, That we regard the late efforts witnessed in different parts of our land to suppress freedom of discussion on the subject of slavery, as anti-republican, and by no means adapted to preserve the virtue of community and perpetuate the blessings of our free institutions.

On motion of Mr. BARBER of Middlebury,

Resolved, That this Society consider that the only effectual remedy for the evil of slavery is the success of the doctrine of immediate emancipation.

Resolved, That we deem immediate emancipation practicable, safe, and beneficial to the slaveholder and the slave.

Resolved, That in every system of slavery it results of necessity, that 'cruelty is the rule and kindness the exception.'

On motion of Mr. JOHNSON of Middlebury,

Resolved, That the thanks of this Society be presented to Mr. O. S. Murray for his arduous and disinterested labors as an agent, and that the treatment which he has received in several places, where he has been prevented from pleading in behalf of the slave, by lawless violence, is an insult to this Society, and excites our warmest indignation.

On motion of Mr. MILLIGAN of Ryegate,

Resolved, That the Corresponding Secretary of this Society be directed to address GEORGE THOMPSON and CHARLES STUART, assure them of the confidence and respect of this Society, and invite them to visit this State the ensuing spring, in the prosecution of their philanthropic labors in behalf of the oppressed of our country.

Resolved, That we have no reason to fear but that the Lord will ultimately extend deliverance to the poor oppressed people for whom we sympathise; yet we should be very careful and prayerful that we may keep still in our own view, and be enabled to present to others the arm of emancipation as the only agency in which we can ultimately trust.

On motion,

Voted, That the Executive Committee be empowered to appoint five members as delegates from this Society to attend the second Annual Meeting of the American Anti-Slavery Society.

The Executive Committee were authorized to call another meeting of the Society at such time and place as they might think advisable.

REPORT.

It is now three hundred and thirty years since the Portuguese commenced the African slave-trade. More than two hundred years, the most enlightened nations of Christendom have incessantly made merchandize of the colored race—a merchandize based on the principles of force—a merchandize whose beginning was piracy, and whose whole course has been marked with violence and blood. Cardinal Ximenes, Elizabeth, Cowper, and other illustrious individuals, early protested against such a violation of Christianity and nature; but the clamorous voice of avarice, on the contrary, overpowered the groans of the perishing victims, and drowned every cry of humanity raised in their behalf. Charles the Fifth of Germany checked the progress of this traffic, in 1542, by ordering the manumission of all the slaves in his American dominions; but as soon as that remarkable man had retired from his throne, slavery was revived. Pope Leo Tenth, Baxter, and many other powerful minds, in their turn, bore testimony against the system, but the murderous work went on. Nothing effectual was done towards its suppression, until about the time the philanthropic Clarkson came forward and undertook the cause of the African.

Here commences an important era in the history of efforts for the relief of that long abused people. This great apostle of African emancipation accomplished more than all who had gone before him. It is about fifty years since he began his work. The Quakers, always lovers of civil as well as religious liberty, had from 1727—at which time the slave-trade came within the discipline of their Society—been taught to look upon merchandizing in human flesh with horror and hatred. To them justly belongs the honor of having discovered the only proper and effectual remedy for this dreadful malady,* which has wrought such destruction in the human family. By keeping the subject alive, they had perceived that as facts came out showing the enormities of the nefarious traffic, hatred towards it increased: hence they concluded that it was only necessary

* This metaphor is used for the want of a better. Let none understand by it that we view slavery as a *misfortune* merely. No. It is a crime before Heaven, and every righteous tribunal.

to enlighten the great mass of community, who were neither interested in it nor personally acquainted with it, and it would be frowned out of existence. The first Association of which we read, for the promotion of this object, was formed among the English Quakers, in 1783. Its Executive Committee consisted of six, and held its first meeting on the seventh of July of that year. In the same year, Anthony Benezet, from this side of the Atlantic, addressed a letter on the subject to Charlotte, Queen of England. John Woolman, another American Quaker, and a gospel minister of that Society, had written and preached much on the subject, from 1747 to 1772. These and other individuals in New York and Pennsylvania had contributed more or less to produce the state of things that existed in that religious body, at the time the mentioned Association was formed.

The first step taken by the Committee towards their enterprise was, to enlist the press; and before the year had closed, they had secured a place to hold up the light before the public in ten or twelve provincial papers. During this year, the Society petitioned Parliament, and in 1784, distributed books on the subject. In 1785, the Vice Chancellor of the University of Cambridge gave out the following question to the senior bachelors of arts, as a subject for the prize essay: 'Is it right to make slaves of others against their will?' Thomas Clarkson, a member of the class, had obtained the first prize in the lower class the former year, and it was not expected that he would now willingly stand second-best. At first it was with him a contest for literary honor; but while looking after facts to support his thesis, he very much lost sight of the honor and emolument, in gazing at slavery. He had anticipated pleasure from the invention and arrangement of his argument, but he had been ignorant of his subject. He tried to persuade himself that the shocking facts which he discovered were fictions, but his investigation had been thorough and his authorities were indisputable. In his own words: 'It became now not so much a trial for academical reputation, as for the production of a work that might be useful to injured Africa.' He obtained the prize, but did not stop here. The labor of procuring this paltry reward was only the inception of an achievement that—when men shall have become rational beings, wise men shall have come to their senses, and the milk of human kindness shall flow instead of innocent blood—will raise Thomas Clarkson as much above Alexander, Cæsar and Bonaparte, as a benefactor of his species will then be raised above a destroyer.

This benevolent man now devoted his life. He had been designed for the church, his prospects were brilliant, and he

expected to displease his friends, but he broke away from them all and went about exploring the intricate labyrinth of the horrid traffic, travelling thousands of miles, followed with threats of assassination, visiting custom-houses and slave-ships, conversing with those who were interested in the slave-trade as well as those who were acquainted with it, not interested. By spreading the facts, collected at such labor and peril, before Wilberforce and Pitt, (who were at first as ignorant of the subject as he had formerly been,) he secured their co-operation, and thus, on the ninth of May, 1787, brought the great subject before Parliament, in a resolution for the abolishment of a traffic, whose existence was a violation of the laws of God and the rights of man. Who will believe it? this resolution was contested in the British Parliament *twenty years*, against the powerful eloquence of Wilberforce, Pitt, and Fox, and constant soul-stirring petitions from all parts of the kingdom. During this period, Clarkson travelled some half-dozen times around Great Britain, and visited France once or more, collecting and diffusing light. At length the bill passed and received the King's signature on the 25th of March, 1807.

The United States had 'framed their iniquity by law,' so that their constitution would not allow the righteous deed until 1808. France and other nations have come up to the work, until about all is done that can be done to suppress the foreign trade, except domestic slavery be abolished. It is now becoming a settled axiom that slavery is the cause, the trade the effect. How deplorable that the mighty efforts which have been put forth against the effect, had not been directed to the removal of the cause, especially as the latter of the two is the more tangible, and as a blow here tells upon both. We may by no means undervalue the labors of the great and good men whose names we have mentioned—for they awakened a sympathy for the colored man, and cast an influence against the great and terrible system of African oppression, that will be felt until the last chain is broken—yet we may rejoice and thank God that the later British philanthropists have discovered the error, and directed their attacks to the vulnerable part. We may learn and profit much from the history of efforts for emancipation in Great Britain. For more than forty years they labored to break up the slave-trade on the coast of Africa, and to *mitigate* slavery in their colonies; but they accomplished neither the one nor the other. As soon as they put justice, and mercy, and liberty, and the law of God, and human happiness, against pounds, shillings, and pence, the scale instantly turned. Since they have bent their moral energies against their own slavery, calling for *immediate emancipation*, as the duty of the master

and the right of the slave, they have not only gained this object, but they have done more in this way, in these half-dozen years, towards breaking up the foreign trade, than all their physical forces had before done in a third of a century. Blows at the root are sure to kill the branches.

In the United States we have been behind our British brethren, and we are yet behind them. True, Societies for the promotion of emancipation have existed here, at different intervals for more than forty years; but they have been scattered, feeble in numbers, in faith and in practice, and have gone down. Then we have had our Colonization Society, rocking us to sleep, while slavery has been rolling in upon us like a flood. Little, comparatively, was effected here, until Mr. Garrison commenced publishing the *Liberator* in Boston, on the 1st of January, 1831. That little sheet, small as it was at first, gave a shock, as if this nation had been shaken by an earthquake; the trembling and quaking has increased from that hour to this, and there is to be no more peace in our borders until thralldom is broken, and every American is a freeman. In January, 1832, a Society was formed in Boston, numbering, at its organization, twelve members, and styling itself the *New-England Anti-Slavery Society*.^{*} This was the first of the present order of Anti-Slavery Societies, in the United States. It was branded as a Society of ‘ardent young men’—‘madmen’—‘fanatics’—but their principles were omnipotent, and they went forward; ‘one of them has chased a thousand, and two have put ten thousand to flight.’ The first object of this Society was, in the words of its constitution, ‘to endeavor by all means sanctioned by law, humanity and religion, to effect the abolition of slavery in the United States.’ Auxiliaries to it were formed in different parts of New-England, during 1832 and ’33, among which were two or three town Societies in this State. A Society was formed in the city of New-York, in October, 1833, consisting, according to the account given of it by its enemies, of thirty-two men and two women. This Society proposed to ‘take all lawful, moral and religious means, to effect a total and immediate abolition of slavery in the United States.’ In December following, about sixty delegates, from ten different States, assembled in Philadelphia and organized the *American Anti-Slavery Society*, whose declaration of sentiments is before the world. Its constitution declares that the Society ‘shall aim to convince all our fellow citizens, by arguments addressed to their understandings and consciences, that slaveholding is a heinous crime in the sight of God, and that

^{*} It has since taken the name of Massachusetts Anti-Slavery Society, auxiliary to the American Anti-Slavery Society.

the duty, safety, and best interests of all concerned, require its *immediate abandonment*, without expatriation.' Since the formation of the National Society, the success of our cause has exceeded the most sanguine expectations of its friends. What one of the Sixty would have presumed, fourteen months ago, in the Adelphi Hall, to predict what his eyes have since seen, and his ears have heard? A signal triumph of truth and love, over error and prejudice, was witnessed in Lane Seminary, in the very suburbs of slavery, within a few weeks.

Three State Societies have been formed; the Vermont, in May last; the Maine, in October; and the New-Hampshire, in November.

This may be the proper place to notice the progress of this Society and of the cause in Vermont. The first seed was sown in this State, by the Liberator. The New-England Society, in a considerable measure, prepared the way to the formation of this, by employing an agent several months in this State, in the summer of 1833, and winter of '33 and '34. The cause is also indebted to Rev. Henry Jones, for early labors in Caledonia and Washington counties; and much credit is due to the State Journal, Middlebury Free Press, and North Star, for allowing our cause a hearing in their columns.

The Vermont Anti-Slavery Society was organized on the first day of May, 1834, about one hundred delegates being present, from thirty different towns. Since that time a traveling agent has been employed, five months, who has delivered from eighty to ninety lectures, and formed auxiliary Societies in ten or twelve towns, which, with those previously formed, make thirty town Societies in the State. The way is preparing for forming many more auxiliaries. One thousand copies of a circular were distributed in June, addressed to the clergy of this State, it being the report of a committee of the State Convention, on colonization, designed to disabuse the people on that subject. We are sure the effort was not lost. Five hundred copies of Mr. Birney's Letter, printed in New-York, have been circulated by this Society and many more by its auxiliaries. The effect of these in opening eyes to the colonization delusion, has been most salutary. Three local agents have been appointed, who have lectured to some extent.* By such means as these, this Society, in the nine months of its existence, has brought thousands to examine the great subject of slavery and emancipation, hundreds of whom have enrolled their names to support our cause.

Since the organization of this Society, many important events have occurred, in connection with our cause, worthy of notice.

* These agents will accept the thanks of the Executive Committee and of the Society for their gratuitous services.

Charles Stuart and George Thompson have come to our assistance from Great Britain. They have arrived when we most need them. The battle waxes hot. They have been through the war at home. Who will not welcome such men, at such a time? We may expect to see Mr. Thompson in Vermont, in the spring. Who will not receive him with open arms?

On the first day of August, the chains fell from the last slave in the British dominions. Eight hundred thousand were emancipated in a moment! Glorious moment! What a fountain of misery was instantly dried up! What a fountain of joy burst forth! That man is not to be envied whose soul is not filled with delight at the thought. But what shall we say or think of the depraved, malignant wretch who busies himself at catching and magnifying every rumor of the least unfavorable result, to make it tell against the cause of emancipation? We have spoken of their *immediate emancipation*. They were immediately, 'in the twinkling of an eye,' changed from *property*, from *things*, into *men*—into *human beings*. They can no longer be bought and sold—no longer shut out from the light of knowledge and religion—they no longer labor for the sole benefit of others—their own souls and bodies are their own—their husbands, wives, parents and children are their own.

The aristocracy of our country and their creatures are pointing us to the sullenness and idleness of the emancipated in Jamaica, as the effects of their emancipation. We reject their conclusion; there is no connexion of cause and effect, of antecedent and consequent, in the case. It is true, that those in power are having some difficulty with their system of apprenticeship; so they had with slavery; and they will find difficulty just in proportion as they continue to oppress. The trouble is, not that they have left off too much of their oppression, but that they have not left off enough. Of this the proof at hand is beyond controversy, and the facts agree with reason. Antigua and the Bermudas rejected the apprenticeship scheme, and gave their slaves immediate, *unconditional*, freedom; and the result has been peaceful and satisfactory.* While we

* 'ANTIGUA, BERMUDAS, &c. How judicious has been the conduct of the planters in Antigua and the Bermudas! They foresaw the difficulties connected with the apprenticeship, and wisely provided against them *by its total rejection*. The slaves in these colonies were declared free "without restriction and without condition," on the first of August, and this policy has been followed by the happiest results. The transition from slavery to freedom has been peaceful—compulsory toil has been exchanged for voluntary labor. A contented and grateful peasantry now work willingly on the plantations, for small wages, and all classes are satisfied with the change.

We have received Antigua papers to the 28th August, which contain the most gratifying accounts of the events which have transpired in that important island.

greatly rejoice that no human beings are any more to be treated as goods and chattels, in the British dominions, we mourn that so much power is left in the hands of the tyrants, in some of the islands. Let the results of these different measures not be forgotten by us. Let both be in constant remembrance. Let one stand before us for warning, the other for imitation.

Among the auspicious events in our own country is, the coming off of Mr. Birney, from slavery and colonization to immediate abolition. The attending circumstances, taken in connexion with the moral and intellectual worth of the man, make this an important acquisition to our cause. The people of the South are starting from their slumbers; and it is not the spirit of despotism alone that is rousing. The spirit of philanthropy and patriotism, whatever there is of it left, is awake. The colonization spell is broken. They begin to feel and to acknowledge that slavery is a sin. Religious bodies are taking it up. The Presbyterian Synod of Kentucky has passed strong resolutions against it. The Synods of Tennessee and Virginia are not far behind.

The refusal of the students of Lane Seminary to put on the manacles that were forged for them, is another important step taken towards the overthrow of tyranny in the United States. Young men—literary, benevolent, valiant, powerful young men, are every where flocking to the standard of emancipation. A large proportion of the students in the Western Reserve College, in the Oneida Institute, in Andover Seminary, in Waterville College, and in other Colleges and Seminaries are preparing to go forth and lift up their voices against oppression.

There is one more cheering event that gives us unmingled pleasure. Our Clarksons and Sharpes have been stirring the people; we now have our Wilberforce in our National Legislature. Sixteen days ago, Mr. Dickson of New-York made an attack upon slavery and the slave-trade in the District of

since the 1st of that month. It will be seen that they triumphantly demonstrate the practicability and safety of immediate and entire emancipation.

August 7. The great doubt is solved;—the alarming prognostications of the advocates of slavery falsified;—the highest hopes of the negro's friends fulfilled, and their pledges honorably redeemed! A whole people, comprising thirty thousand souls, have passed from slavery into freedom, not only without the slightest irregularity, but with the solemn and decorous tranquility of a Sabbath.

August 21. The third week of freedom will close with this day, and again we are bound to express our gratitude and praise to the Divine goodness for the perfect tranquility which the island enjoys. Not the least symptom of insubordination has manifested itself any where; and the daily accounts from all quarters, testify to the excellent disposition and conduct of the new freemen.

We much regret that the exemplary conduct of the emancipated negroes has not met with a corresponding return from many of their masters. The haughty, domineering, and revengeful spirit engendered by the slave system, is still in existence and operation.'—[*The Abolitionist*, published under the direction of the British and Foreign Society for the universal abolition of slavery and the slave-trade, London, November, 1834.]

Columbia. The voice of six thousand—ay, of two millions of perishing slaves; the voice of the people, of females, in their behalf, has at length been heard. Courage! friends of humanity. Patience! victims of cupidity and lust. Faith! hope! energy! perseverance! lovers of our country, defenders of the rights of the poor, servants of the Most High God. Mercy! forbearance one year longer! O thou Avenger of the oppressed!

Possibly our State Legislature may think it 'prudent and discreet,' next fall, to direct our Senators, and request our Representatives in Congress—at least as many of them as desire instruction on this subject*—to use their efforts to drive slavery from the doors of our national Capitol. We would not be wantonly censorious—we would not impeach motives; but who will believe, ten years hence, that the Legislature of Vermont, in 1834, refused to make use of their constitutional power to remove slavery from our national domain? O! when will it be *discreet* and *prudent* to exercise our constitutional power to put an end to kidnapping and murder under the very wings of our national eagle? How much longer shall the soil of the District of Columbia be watered with the tears and fattened with the blood of Americans? When will it be discreet and prudent to commence wiping their tears and healing their wounds? Who shall fix on the time *when?*—the avaricious slave traders? Now that the subject is fairly before Congress, we hope that it will not be dismissed for the want of any action that is lawful and peaceful, on the part of the citizens of this State.

Among the important occurrences of a few months past, there is one too infamously important to be left unnoticed; we refer to the mobbing and violence that is so widely obtaining, trampling down the constitution of our State and of the United States, and making war upon the very genius of liberty. These riots are the legitimate fruits of that spirit of slavery that has ever been diffusing itself throughout this Republic. For the want of a better defence against the attacks of truth and reason, tyranny has resorted to its accustomed weapons. But has it come to this, that freedom of speech is to be held at the nod of the rabble, the beck of some aristocrat behind the curtain, some factious demagogue, or profligate newspaper editor? Let the friends of civil and religious liberty answer. The preliminary question to be settled is, will we be freemen, or will

*The argument used in our last Legislature, which seemed to be most effectual in procuring the dismissal of the resolution to instruct our delegation in Congress, relative to slavery in the District of Columbia, was this: that there is no need of action on the part of the Legislature, because our delegates in Congress are already opposed to slavery, and ready to act whenever it shall be 'discreet and prudent;' yet one of our delegates, who was in Montpelier at the time, was there heard to say that he wished to be instructed—he was ready to act, waiting for instruction.

we be slaves? It behooves the people to speak out on this subject. Toleration of free discussion lies at the foundation of republicanism ;—take it away and the whole fabric crumbles : nothing is left of liberty but the name.

Malignant slander and brutal violence may have their little hour and rage, but it must be short in a virtuous and enlightened community. Thanks to Him who is able to make the wrath of man to praise Him, and to restrain the remainder—who is wont to overrule evil for good, and to carry the counsels of the wicked headlong, their violence will have less power against our cause than against our persons. Vermont is the wrong place for mobism. The wolves that prey upon our flocks by night, may find a retreat in our Green Mountains ; but they who tread under their feet our constitution, and wage war upon discussion, the citadel of our liberties—whether the lawless rabble, or those who set them on—will find themselves whelmed in public indignation.

There is great complaint, because we oppose the Colonization Society. But what has been the character of our opposition? Have we shown ourselves immoral? Do we oppose the Temperance Society? What have been our weapons? Have we used clubs and brick-bats? Have we stirred up mobs? No. Nothing like it. Had we used brute violence against that Society, its friends would have had a right to complain ; but we have had nothing to do with that sort of argument—it all comes from the other side.

We cannot here speak at length of colonization ; but let none therefore conclude that we think more favorably of it now than at any former period. We believe that it receives very little support now, as a remedy for slavery, so that little or nothing need be said on this point. The fact that the present annual increase of the colored population of the United States is about 70,000, taken in connexion with certain figures on the tenth page of the African Repository, of March, 1834, will show that one half of one per cent. of the increase has not been removed, since the Society has been in operation. The number of slaves in the United States is half a million greater now than it was when the Society was organized. But suppose the Society's means augmented a thousand fold, where is its power to reach one slave beyond what it is for the interest of the slaveholder to turn off? Then who cannot see that the supporters of slavery would find a motive to perpetuate it, in the fact that the removal of those who should go would 'augment instead of diminishing the value of the property left behind,'* in the same way that the price of stock left on our farms in Vermont, is raised, by draining off the surplus?

* Mr. Clay's Speech—Tenth Annual Report, A. C. S.

We stop here to ask the people of Vermont who have supported that Society, a few plain questions, which they are under more obligation to answer to their own consciences than to us. Do they support it understandingly? What is their object? Have they studied its constitution? If so, do they find the object, or objects which they have had in view, specified in the constitution? Do they support any other measures as a remedy for slavery?—any other for the relief of the free people of color? If they know that the Society's constitution confines its efforts 'exclusively' to the colonizing of the free people of color, do they also know that *that* people had no hand in getting up the Society—that they did not call for it—that they made known to the Society, before it had existed twelve months, that they considered its services gratuitous*—that they have always looked upon it as their enemy, and have, as a body, steadily protested against it from its beginning down to the present hour—that twenty different associations of the enlightened portion of them, in the principal cities and villages from Portland to Richmond, have published their resolutions against it?† Is there any thing strange or unaccountable in

* It has been asserted that the people of color would never have thought of opposing the Colonization Society, had not Mr. Garrison opposed it. The truth is exactly the reverse; their opposition had an influence in turning him. They commenced hostilities against it in 1817, he in 1830.

† PHILADELPHIA, January, 1817.

At a numerous meeting of the people of color, convened at Bethel church, to take into consideration the propriety of remonstrating against the contemplated measure, that is to exile us from the land of our nativity; JAMES FORTEN was called to the chair, and RUSSEL PARROT appointed Secretary. The intent of the meeting having been stated by the chairman, the following resolutions were adopted, without one dissenting voice.

Whereas, our ancestors (not of choice) were the first successful cultivators of the wilds of America, we their descendants feel ourselves entitled to participate in the blessings of her luxuriant soil, which their blood and sweat manured; and that any measure or system of measures, having a tendency to banish us from her bosom, would not only be cruel, but in direct violation of those principles, which have been the boast of this republic.

Resolved, That we view with deep abhorrence the unmerited stigma attempted to be cast upon the reputation of the free people of color, by the promoters of this measure—"that they are a dangerous and useless part of community," when in the state of disfranchisement in which they live, in the hour of danger they ceased to remember their wrongs, and rallied around the standard of their country.

Resolved, That we never will separate ourselves voluntarily from the slave population in this country; they are our brethren by the ties of consanguinity, of suffering, and of wrong; and we feel that there is more virtue in suffering privations with them, than in fancied advantages for a season.

‘ BY THE COLORED INHABITANTS OF NEW BEDFORD.

Resolved, That in whatever light we view the Colonization Society, we discover nothing in it but error, prejudice, and oppression; that the warm and beneficent hand of philanthropy is not apparent in the system, but the influence of the Society on public opinion is more prejudicial to the interest and welfare of the people of color in the United States, than slavery itself.

‘ BY THE NATIONAL COLORED CONVENTION HELD IN PHILADELPHIA, IN 1832.

Resolved, That we still solemnly and sincerely protest against any interference, on the part of the American Colonization Society, with the free colored population in these United States, so long as they shall countenance or endeavor to use coer-

the hostility of this people? Is not America their home? Are not the bones of their fathers here, who fought and bled for our liberties; and who shall refuse them a grave at home? Why should they wish to remove to the sultry shores of Africa?—because we say to them, ‘Get out of our sight?’—and is this our *benevolence* towards them?

With regard to colonization, as concerning Africa, we have a few words to say. It must not be taken for granted that we are enemies to Africa, because we oppose colonization—it were just as fair and logical to conclude that we would injure the sick, because we disapprove the prescriptions of an empiric. While we would do as much to enlighten the African tribes as any other foreign, benighted people, we would act on the same general principles for their good, as for that of any other; but we find nothing in reason, history, or experience, to justify the measures of the American Colonization Society. We should have no objection to a rational voluntary system of colonization, pursued on pacific principles. But the history of colonization, from beginning to end, is a history of conquest, robbery, and extermination. The history of William Penn’s colony furnishes the only considerable exception to this remark, we now think of, and we fear that some of *his* descendants will be found with the red man’s blood in their garments. Passing by the ancient history of colonization, as connected with fable—leaving out the destruction of the original inhabitants of Great Britain, by colonization from the East—saying nothing about the oceans of blood spilt in Central and South America—we ask, what has been the effect of the system on the aborigines of this country? And what more does the present enterprise promise Africa? Has it started on sounder principles? Do the emigrants possess superior moral, intellectual, or religious qualifications? Far from it. Our fathers were not ‘vagabonds;’* they were surnamed *Puritans*; but where are the natives of America? Already we point them beyond the

cive measres, (either directly or indirectly,) to colonize us in any place which is not the object of our choice. And we ask them respectfully, as men and as christians, to cease their unhallowed persecutions, of a people already sufficiently oppressed, or if, as they profess, they have our welfare and prosperity at heart, to assist us in the object of our choice.

We might here repeat our protest against that institution, but it is unnecessary. Our views and sentiments have long since gone to the world—the wings of the wind have borne our disapprobation to that institution. *Time itself cannot erase it.* We have dated our opposition from its beginning, and our views are strengthened by time and circumstances, and they hold the uppermost seat in our affections.’

* Mr. Breckenridge declared, in the seventeenth annual meeting of the Colonization Society, that they had recently carried off to Liberia, ‘two full ship-loads of *vagabonds*.’ Dr. Mechlin, Governor of the Colony, complained in the *African Repository* of December, 1832, that they had just before been sending out to him some of the most ‘degraded and abandoned.’ The *African Repository*, [Vol. 1, p. 68.] represents the class to be removed as a nuisance here, ‘scarcely reached in their debasement by the heavenly light.’

Great River; we shall next remove them over the Rocky Mountains; and what will become of them when the white man's avarice demands the last foot of their native soil?

We are not attempting to settle the question whether more good or evil has resulted to mankind, from the peopling of this continent by the European race; and if we were, we should commence by discarding the principle that the end justifies the means. All the good that can accrue to the present and to all future generations of men, from the establishing of our liberal government, and our scientific, moral, and benevolent institutions, can never justify the robbery and violence, the rapine and slaughter, which have characterized American colonization. Who shall warrant that African colonization shall be attended with better results to the natives of that continent? The same purchasing of land enough to get feet upon; with gewgaws and songs, has commenced—the same building of warlike fortifications—the same jealousies excited in the natives, by these movements—the same mutual hostilities—the same butcheries.

African colonization is at present uncalled for, whether we would promote civilization or Christianity—whether we seek the good of America or Africa. It is uncalled for, to draw from our sparse population to crowd Africa, as the chart of the world will show the population to be twice as dense on that continent as on ours. Of all systems of colonization that have obtained, since Cain went out to the land of Nod, the present is the most unreasonable and unnatural. It is all forced. It is an attempt to turn the stream back to the fountain. Tens and scores of thousands are annually pouring in upon us from the old world, to fill up our vacuum, while we are laboring to set our own elements at work, to discharge a portion of our own unequal contents. It cannot be for the interest of America to turn away *civilized* men—it cannot be for the interest of Africa to receive *uncivilized* men.

As for *christianizing* Africa, we think colonization adapted to any other end than this. The scheme is at war with the spirit of the New Testament. Said the Prince of Peace, 'My kingdom is not of this world, if it were, then would my servants fight'—'all they that take the sword shall perish with the sword.' Again—from the Old Testament—'Wo to him that buildeth a town with blood.' 'The work of righteousness shall be peace.' They have not followed peace—their town is built with blood.* Some may ask whether the colony shall not defend itself. Bear in mind we are now viewing it as a missionary establishment. Now where in the New Testament is

* Mr. Ashmun, describing the effect of a long nine pounder, brought to bear upon the solid ranks of the natives in a certain battle, says: 'Every shot literally spent its force in a solid mass of living human flesh!'—[Af. Repos. Vol. 2, p. 179.]

the Christian missionary directed to build forts, mount cannon, and carry the gospel of peace at the point of the bayonet? 'He that loseth his life for my sake shall find it.' The fruits of pure Christianity are 'love, joy, peace, long-suffering, gentleness, goodness, faith, meekness.'

Cui bono? What is this Society good for? is the final question. To go to its agents and authorized publications for an answer, were about as satisfactory as to have anciently consulted the priests and oracle of Delphi; any answer can be obtained, and every one will be ambiguous. You may read proof, *ad libitum*, that the Society's measures tend to abolish slavery, and at the same time to perpetuate it—to remove a nuisance, and to enlighten Africa—that it aims 'exclusively' at one specific object, and at the same time at an indefinite number of objects. Its constitution, in the hands of an individual supporter, possesses the tenacity of iron; but let Northern and Southern men have hold of it at once, and it has the ductility of wax—the elasticity of the gum-elastic itself. After a long and laborious perusal of the documents of the '*American Society for Colonizing the Free People of Color*'—after attentively watching its operations, and carefully studying its tendencies, if we were now called upon to answer the question, what is the *summum bonum* of the scheme, we must honestly say, that we view it exactly fitted to gratify an unrighteous prejudice, and to rock this nation to sleep, in a cradle of gossamer, over a bottomless gulph. We are not prepared to declare that it has done no good; nor could we say that alcohol has done no good; but we do firmly believe that both alike have done so much more hurt than good, that the world would be far better without them.

We come now to make a plain declaration of our principles and designs, in regard to the colored population of our country. It will be brief. It can be told in a few words. Our principles are intuitive, common-sense principles, written in the Book of God, and engraved on the hearts of men. Our practices shall comport with our principles.

Viewing slavery, as we do, to be a crime of the deepest dye before God—not less wrong in practice than in principle—dangerous to republican government—daily and hourly weakening the bonds of our national union; as accountable beings, as men, and as Americans, we call for its *immediate abandonment*. This demand we have a right to make—it is just—it is reasonable. It will be a vain thing for any man or set of men, at the North or at the South, to tell us that this is an excessive demand—that it is treasonable or seditious. We are a component part of the physical power of this nation, that sustains

slavery, and of the moral power, that is able to crush it. The aristocratic, the time-serving, the man-fearing, ask what right we have to interfere. What right, we ask, had the bystanders to interfere when the ruffian undertook to assassinate the Chief Magistrate of this nation? What right have we to interfere when our neighbors cry from their chamber-windows, their houses being wrapped in flames around them? We are not of the number who confound *right* with *might*.

We are told when we call for immediate abolition, that our work must be a work of time. So we are not to call for the immediate rescue of the drowning man, because it will be a work of time to get to him! Preachers of righteousness, temperance, and judgment, are not to urge immediate heed to the divine requirements, because it will be a work of time to gain the ears and hearts of the depraved! If we only require of the slave-holder that he reform when he finds it expedient, because he will not at once listen to the doctrine of immediate reformation, we may pursue the same course with the robber and adulterer, for the same reason. Nothing can be effectual, short of laying hold of his conscience, and this can never be reached by compromising with him in his wrong doing. He must be made to feel that slavery is a *sin*—then he will repent. Grant him his own time to dispose of the matter, undisturbed, is all he asks. That time will be the latest day of his life, and his last act concerning it will be, to 'entail the evil' on the next generation; and the next generation will demand their own time, and plead innocence because the system was entailed upon them.

Much alarm is expressed, lest we agitate the South. [How is this to be reconciled with the statement that our labor here will be lost, because we are situated so far from the evil?] We are not afraid of disturbing the South. We aim to disturb them—not to injure them, but—they must be disturbed. They are sleeping on a volcano; the surface now heaves under them! The judgments of Heaven hang over them; the arrows of retributive justice already begin to fall! It is our bounden duty to lift up our voices together, and swell them to a tempest—if possible we may awake them to a sense of their guilt, their folly, and their danger—a duty owed to ourselves, to our children, to the oppressor and the oppressed, to Christianity, to the cause of freedom. As for our being heard in the South, there is nothing to prevent. Intelligence knows no geographical boundaries; it does not stop on Mason and Dixon's line; it circulates through this nation, as blood through the animal system. The same conveyance that brings to Vermont Governor McDuffie's doctrine, that slavery is neces-

sary to the perpetuity of our liberties, [!] will carry to South Carolina our doctrine, that slavery is the most *dangerous foe* to our liberties; and the latter will be read with equal avidity as the former, will produce discussion, discussion will elicit truth, and truth will make free. Do not the people of the South hear what we have to say on all other great questions of common interest? and will they be less heedful of what is going on in respect to what they deem their *peculiar* interest? They will eagerly seize and devour every page of anti-slavery matter that falls in their reach. What means the growling in the den? Light is breaking in upon the monster. Our Thomes and our Birneys, seized with sympathy, are spreading the kind contagion. Our Evangelists are kindling a moral blaze in every Seminary and every Synod. Our Emancipators are so many flaming torches, and our Liberators so many bursts of boiling lava, lighting up fires throughout all the dark valley of prejudice and oppression. The cry of Fire!—Fire!! from the watchmen of oppression, already meets us on every southern breeze, and every move they make but fans the flame. The tocsin of slavery sounds but to marshal and encourage its enemies—to confuse and dishearten its friends.

Let those who are alarmed at these things, point out a better way. Let that way be any other than *letting alone* this growing evil, this Boa-constrictor, tightening his folds around the neck of this nation. It has been let alone long enough. The spirit of slavery has diffused itself extensively enough. Danger! Danger! Let those who make this cry, before they run, look around and find where the danger lies. Is there no danger in goading men, already armed with despair? Is there less danger to be apprehended from the slaves, than from those who are employed in holding them? The Union is in danger! The chivalrous men of the South will declare ‘war to the knife!’ And what is the present attitude of these men who are supposed to be for war? Are they prepared for a war of invasion? Every man of them is on sentry at home, and their foes are of their own house. If a Chinese wall could be built between them and us, the knives would be at their throats in less than one week, and they know it. In the name of reason and honor, we beseech the good people of the North not to be over-much frightened. A terrible thing to emancipate two millions of slaves! If there would be difficulty with two millions to-day, what, with two millions and two hundred to-morrow? with two millions and seventy thousand next year? with three millions, fifteen years hence? We pray those who have hitherto looked at the consequence of doing right, to dare for once to look at the consequence of continuing in the wrong,

We now appeal to the understanding and conscience of this nation. We cite the South to their own desolation and wretchedness. We ask them why the wolf now howls in certain portions of Virginia, where were once fertile plantations? Why is that State now the *fourth* or *fifth* in the Union, in point of wealth and population, whereas once it was the *first*? Why is Maryland now less than a *thirtieth* of the population of the United States, whereas, in 1790, it was an *eleventh*? Why does the slightest breeze make them tremble like an aspen? To the North we appeal, in the name of more than two millions, whose blood is as water, and whose grief as wind—in the name of the best interests of this republic—in the name of freedom—in the name of Christianity—in the name of earth and Heaven. Slavery must be abolished. As sure as there is any virtue in moral power—any might in truth—any brotherly love, any common humanity, any sense of shame, any fear of retribution, any regard for justice, in Americans—it will be done speedily and peacefully. What American, what Christian, what human being, will not now come forward, lay aside for a moment differences in politics and religion, and all meaner things, and make common cause against a common enemy? Then what shall hinder us? Justice, and reason, and humanity are on our side; our parent-country has led the way and sent the noblest of her victors to help us; God and angels are with us. Onward! to the bloodless strife! Onward!—stare tyranny in the face—rouse the church—wake the nation. Onward! until cart-whips no longer tear human flesh—until the wo and waste of slavery cease. Onward! until the groans of the oppressed be turned into songs of liberty, and the foulest stigma be removed from a nation calling itself free!

EXTRACT.

‘If there be, within the extent of our knowledge and influence, any participation in this traffic in slaves, let us pledge ourselves upon the *Rock of Plymouth*, to extirpate and destroy it. It is not fit that the land of the pilgrims should bear the shame longer. Let that spot be purified, or let it be set aside from the Christian world; let it be put out of the circle of human sympathies and human regards; and let civilized men henceforth have no communion with it.

‘I invoke those who fill the seats of justice, and all who minister at her altar, that they exercise the wholesome and necessary severity of the law. I invoke the ministers of our religion, that they proclaim its denunciation of those crimes, and add its solemn sanction to the authority of human laws. If the pulpit be silent, whenever or wherever there may be a sinner bloody with this guilt, within the hearing of its voice, the pulpit is false to its trust.’---*Daniel Webster*.

DECLARATION

OF THE

NATIONAL ANTI-SLAVERY CONVENTION,

Assembled in Philadelphia, December 4, 1833.

The Convention, assembled in the city of Philadelphia to organize a National Anti-Slavery Society, promptly seize the opportunity to promulgate the following **DECLARATION OF SENTIMENTS**, as cherished by them in relation to the enslavement of one-sixth portion of the American people.

More than fifty-seven years have elapsed since a band of patriots convened in this place, to devise measures for the deliverance of this country from a foreign yoke. The corner-stone upon which they founded the **TEMPLE OF FREEDOM** was broadly this—‘that all men are created equal; that they are endowed by their Creator with certain inalienable rights; that among these are life, **LIBERTY**, and the pursuit of happiness.’ At the sound of their trumpet-call, three millions of people rose up as from the sleep of death, and rushed to the strife of blood; deeming it more glorious to die instantly as freemen, than desirable to live one hour as slaves. They were few in number; poor in resources; but the honest conviction that **TRUTH**, **JUSTICE**, and **RIGHT** were on their side, made them invincible.

We have met together for the achievement of an enterprise, without which, that of our fathers is incomplete; and which, for its magnitude, solemnity, and probable results upon the destiny of the world, as far transcends theirs, as moral truth does physical force.

In purity of motive, in earnestness of zeal, in decision of purpose, in intrepidity of action, in steadfastness of faith, in sincerity of spirit, we would not be inferior to them.

Their principles led them to wage war against their oppressors, and to spill human blood like water, in order to be free. *Ours* forbid the doing of evil that good may come, and lead us to reject, and to entreat the oppressed to reject, the use of all carnal weapons for deliverance from bondage; relying solely upon those which are spiritual, and mighty through God to the pulling down of strong holds.

Their measures were physical resistance—the marshalling in arms—the hostile array—the mortal encounter. *Ours* shall be such only as the opposition of moral purity to moral corruption—the destruction of error by the potency of truth—the overthrow of prejudice by the power of love—and the abolition of slavery by the spirit of repentance.

Their grievances, great as they were, were trifling in comparison with the wrongs and sufferings of those for whom we plead. Our fathers were never slaves—never bought and sold like cattle—never shut out from the light of knowledge and religion—never subjected to the lash of brutal task-masters.

But those for whose emancipation we are striving—constituting at the present time at least one-sixth part of our countrymen,—are recognized by the law, and treated by their fellow-beings, as marketable commodities—as goods and chattels—as brute beasts; are plundered daily of the fruits of their toil without redress; really enjoying no constitutional

nor legal protection from licentious and murderous outrages upon their persons; are ruthlessly torn asunder—the tender babe from the arms of its frantic mother—the heart-broken wife from her weeping husband—at the caprice or pleasure of irresponsible tyrants. For the crime of having a dark complexion, they suffer the pangs of hunger, the infliction of stripes, and the ignominy of brutal servitude. They are kept in heathenish darkness by laws expressly enacted to make their instruction a criminal offence.

These are the prominent circumstances in the condition of more than two millions of our people, the proof of which may be found in thousands of indisputable facts, and in the laws of the slave-holding States.

Hence we maintain—That in view of the civil and religious privileges of this nation, the guilt of its oppression is unequalled by any other on the face of the earth; and, therefore,

That it is bound to repent instantly, to undo the heavy burden, to break every yoke, and to let the oppressed go free.

We further maintain—That no man has a right to enslave or inbrute his brother—to hold or acknowledge him, for one moment, as a piece of merchandize—to keep back his hire by fraud—or to brutalize his mind by denying him the means of intellectual, social, and moral improvement.

The right to enjoy liberty is inalienable. To invade it, is to usurp the prerogative of Jehovah. Every man has a right to his own body—to the products of his own labor—to the protection of law--and to the common advantages of society. It is piracy to buy or steal a native African, and subject him to servitude. Surely the sin is as great to enslave an AMERICAN as an AFRICAN.

Therefore we believe and affirm--That there is no difference, in principle, between the African slave trade and American slavery;

That every American citizen, who retains a human being in involuntary bondage as his property, is [according to Scripture*] a MAN-STEALER;

That the slaves ought instantly to be set free, and brought under the protection of law;

That if they had lived from the time of Pharaoh down to the present period, and had been entailed through successive generations, their right to be free could never have been alienated, but their claims would have constantly risen in solemnity;

That all those laws which are now in force, admitting the right of slavery, are therefore before God utterly null and void; being an audacious usurpation of the Divine prerogative, a daring infringement on the law of Nature, a base overthrow of the very foundations of the social compact, a complete extinction of all the relations, endearments, and obligations of mankind, and a presumptuous transgression of all the holy commandments; and that therefore they ought to be instantly abrogated.

We further believe and affirm---That all persons of color who possess the qualifications which are demanded of others, ought to be admitted forthwith to the enjoyment of the same privileges, and the exercise of the same prerogatives, as others; and that the paths of preferment, of wealth, and of intelligence, should be opened as widely to them as to persons of a white complexion.

We maintain that no compensation should be given to the planters emancipating their slaves;

Because it would be a surrender of the great fundamental principle, that man cannot hold property in man;

* Exod. xxi. 16; Deut. xxiv. 7.

Because SLAVERY IS A CRIME, AND THEREFORE IT IS NOT AN ARTICLE TO BE SOLD;

Because the holders of slaves are not the just proprietors of what they claim;—freeing the slaves is not depriving them of property, but restoring it to its right owners;—it is not wronging the master, but righting the slave—restoring him to himself;

Because immediate and general emancipation would only destroy nominal, not real property: it would not amputate a limb or break a bone of the slaves, but by infusing motives into their breasts, would make them doubly valuable to the masters as free laborers; and

Because if compensation is to be given at all, it should be given to the outraged and guiltless slaves, and not to those who have plundered and abused them.

We regard as delusive, cruel and dangerous, any scheme of expatriation which pretends to aid, either directly or indirectly, in the emancipation of the slaves, or to be a substitute for the immediate and total abolition of slavery.

We fully and unanimously recognize the sovereignty of each State, to legislate exclusively on the subject of slavery which is tolerated within its limits. We concede that Congress, *under the present national compact*, has no right to interfere with any of the slave States in relation to this momentous subject.

But we maintain that Congress has a right, and is solemnly bound to suppress the domestic slave-trade between the several States, and to abolish slavery in those portions of our territory which the constitution has placed under its exclusive jurisdiction.

We also maintain that there are, at the present time, the highest obligations resting upon the people of the free States, to remove slavery by moral and political action, as prescribed in the constitution of the United States. They are now living under a pledge of their tremendous physical force to fasten the galling fetters of tyranny upon the limbs of millions in the southern States; they are liable to be called at any moment to suppress a general insurrection of the slaves; they authorize the slave owner to vote for three-fifths of his slaves as property, and thus enable him to perpetuate his oppression; they support a standing army at the south for its protection; and they seize the slave who has escaped into their territories, and send him back to be tortured by an enraged master or a brutal driver.

This relation to slavery is criminal and full of danger: IT MUST BE BROKEN UP.

These are our views and principles—these, our designs and measures. With entire confidence in the overruling justice of God, we plant ourselves upon the Declaration of our Independence, and the truths of Divine Revelation, as upon the EVERLASTING ROCK.

We shall organize Anti-Slavery Societies, if possible, in every city, town and village in our land.

We shall send forth Agents to lift up the voice of remonstrance, of warning, of entreaty and rebuke.

We shall circulate, unsparingly and extensively, anti-slavery tracts and periodicals.

We shall enlist the PULPIT and the PRESS in the cause of the suffering and the dumb.

We shall aim at a purification of the churches from all participation in the guilt of slavery.

We shall encourage the labor of freemen rather than that of the slaves, by giving a preference to their productions; and

We shall spare no exertions nor means to bring the whole nation to speedy repentance.

Our trust for victory is solely in GOD. *We* may be personally defeated, but our principles never. TRUTH, JUSTICE, REASON, HUMANITY, must and will gloriously triumph. Already a host is coming up to the help of the Lord against the mighty, and the prospect before us is full of encouragement.

Submitting this DECLARATION to the candid examination of the people of this country, and of the friends of liberty throughout the world, we hereby affix our signatures to it; pledging ourselves that, under the guidance and by the help of Almighty God, we will do all that in us lies, consistently with this Declaration of our principles, to overthrow the most execrable system of slavery that has ever been witnessed upon earth; to deliver our land from its deadliest curse; to wipe out the foulest stain which rests upon our national escutcheon; and to secure to the colored population of the United States all the rights and privileges which belong to them as men and as Americans—come what may to our persons, our interests, or our reputations—whether we live to witness the triumph of LIBERTY, JUSTICE and HUMANITY, or perish untimely as martyrs in this great, benevolent and holy cause.

Signed in the Adelphi Hall, in the City of Philadelphia, on the sixth day of December, A. D. 1833.

EXTRACTS.

‘Never was a system so big with wickedness or cruelty; in whatever part of it you direct your view, the eye finds no comfort, no satisfaction, no relief. It is the prerogative of slavery to separate from evil its concomitant good, and to reconcile discordant mischiefs; it robs war of its generosity, it deprives peace of its security. You have the vices of polished society without its knowledge or its comforts; and the evils of barbarism without its simplicity. Its ravages are constant and unintermitted in the extent; in the continuance, universal and indiscriminate. No age, no sex, no rank, no condition is exempt from the fatal influence of this wide-wasting calamity! Thus it is the full measure of pure, unmixed, unsophisticated wickedness; and scorning all competition or comparison, it stands without a rival in the secure, undisputed possession of its detestable pre-eminence.’—*Wilberforce*.

‘Tell those who would paralyze your exertions in this righteous cause, by anticipations of danger, or considerations of national policy, that, whatever is *moral duty*, can never, ultimately, be a *political evil*; that to do *evil* that *good* may come—or to avoid *good*, lest *evil* should come, is as crooked a doctrine in Politics as it is in Divinity; and if a Heathen could exclaim, “*Fiat justitia ruat Cælum*,” well may the Christian adopt similar language, with his clearer views, and stronger confidence in the superintendence and protection of a Power as Omnipotent as Just!’—*Abolitionist’s Catechism*.

‘Come forward, we beseech you, as men, and as Christians; temperately, but fearlessly; constitutionally, but DECIDEDLY, in the support of every legitimate measure for the utter abolition of a system which no prospect of private gain, no consideration of public advantage, no plea of political expediency, can sufficiently justify or excuse: thus will you extend the blessings of Liberty to hundreds of thousands of your fellow creatures; hold up to an enlightened world a glorious and merciful example, and stand among the foremost in the defence of the violated rights of Human Nature.’—*Anti-Slavery Tract*.

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CLAP

S P E E C H

OF

SENATOR DOUGLAS,

BEFORE THE

LEGISLATURE OF ILLINOIS,

APRIL 25, 1861,

In compliance with a Joint Resolution of the two Houses.

The joint session of the Legislature having assembled in the hall of the House of Representatives, Senator Douglas, accompanied by several friends, entered at a quarter to eight. Mr. Speaker Cullom then introduced him to the Legislature.

Mr. DOUGLAS said:

Mr. Speaker, and Gentlemen of the Senate and House of Representatives:

I am not insensible to the patriotic motives which have prompted you to do me the honor to invite me to address you on the momentous issues now presented in the condition of our country. With a heart filled with sadness and grief I proceed to comply with your request.

For the first time since the adoption of the Federal Constitution, a wide-spread conspiracy exists to destroy the best government the sun of heaven ever shed its rays upon. [Applause.] Hostile armies are now marching upon the Federal Capitol, with a view of planting a revolutionary flag upon its dome; seizing the national archives; taking captive the president elected by the votes of the people, and holding him in the hands of secessionists and disunionists. A war of aggression and of extermination is being waged against the government established by our fathers. The boast has gone forth by the authorities of this revolutionary government, that on the first day of May the revo-

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lutionary flag shall float from the walls of the capitol at Washington, and that on the fourth day of July the rebel army shall hold possession of the Hall of Independence in Philadelphia.

The simple question presented to us is, whether we will wait for the enemy to carry out his boast of making war upon our soil; or whether we will rush as one man to the defense of the government and its capital, and defend it from the hands of all assailants who have threatened to destroy it. [Great enthusiasm.] Already the piratical flag has been unfurled against the commerce of the United States. Letters of marque have been issued, appealing to the pirates of the world to assemble under that revolutionary flag, and commit depredations on the commerce carried on under the stars and stripes. The navigation of our great river into the Gulf of Mexico is obstructed. Hostile batteries have been planted upon its banks; custom houses have already been established; and we are required now to pay tribute and taxes, without having a voice in making the laws imposing them, or having a share in the proceeds after they have been collected. The question is, whether this war of aggression shall proceed, and we remain with folded arms, inattentive spectators; or whether we shall meet the aggressors at the threshold and turn back the tide of revolution and usurpation.

So long as there was a hope of peaceful solution, I prayed and implored for compromise. I can appeal to my countrymen with confidence that I have spared no effort, omitted no opportunity, to secure a peaceful solution of all these troubles, and thus restore peace, happiness and fraternity to this country. When all propositions of peace fail, and a war of aggression is proclaimed, there is but one course left for the patriot, and that is to rally under that flag which has waved over the Capitol from the days of Washington, and around the government established by Washington, Madison, Hamilton, and their compeers. [Great cheering.]

What is the alleged cause for this invasion of the rights and authority of the government of the United States? The cause alleged is that the institutions of the Southern States are not safe under the Federal Government. What evidence has been presented that they are insecure? I appeal to every man within the sound of my voice to tell me at what period, from the time that Washington was inaugurated down to this hour, have the rights of the Southern States—the rights of the slaveholders—been more secure than they are at this moment? When in the whole history of this government have they stood on so firm a basis? For the first time in the history of this Republic, there is no restriction by act of Congress upon the institution of slavery, anywhere

within the limits of the United States. Then it cannot be the territorial question that has given them a cause for rebellion. When was the fugitive slave law executed with more fidelity than since the inauguration of the present incumbent of the presidential office? [Much applause.] Let the people of Chicago speak and tell us when were the laws of the land executed with as much firmness and fidelity, so far as the fugitive slaves are concerned, as they are now. Can any man tell me of any one act of aggression that has been committed or attempted since the last presidential election, that justifies this violent disruption of the Federal Union?

I ask you to reflect, and then point out any one act that has been done—any one duty that has been omitted to be done—of which any one of these disunionists can justly complain. Yet we are told, simply because a certain political party has succeeded in a presidential election, they choose to consider that their liberties are not safe, and therefore they are justified in breaking up the government!

I had supposed that it was a cardinal and fundamental principle of our system of government that the decision of the people at the ballot-box, without fraud, according to the forms of the Constitution, was to command the implicit obedience of every good citizen. [Loud applause.] If defeat at a presidential election is to justify the minority, or any portion of the minority, in raising the traitorous hand of rebellion against the constituted authorities, you will find the future history of the United States written in the history of Mexico. According to my reading of Mexican history, there has never been one presidential term, from the time of the revolution of 1820 down to this day, when the candidate elected by the people ever served his four years. In every instance, either the defeated candidate has seized upon the presidential chair by the use of the bayonet, or he has turned out the duly elected president before his term expired. Are we to inaugurate this Mexican system in the United States of America? [No! never!] Suppose the case to be reversed. Suppose the Disunion candidate had been elected by any means—I care not what, if by any means in accordance with the forms of the Constitution—at the last presidential election. Then, suppose the Republicans had raised a rebellion against his authority. In that case you would have found me tendering my best efforts and energies to John C. Breckinridge to put down the Republican rebels. [Tremendous applause.] And if you had attempted such a rebellion, I would have justified him in calling forth all the power and energies of this country to have crushed you out. [Continued applause.]

The first duty of an American citizen, or of a citizen of any constitutional government, is obedience to the constitution and laws of his country. [Applause.] I have no apprehension that any man in Illinois, or beyond the limits of our own beloved State, will misconstrue or misunderstand my motive. So far as any of the partisan questions are concerned, I stand in equal, irreconcilable and undying opposition both to the Republicans and the Secessionists. [Applause.] You all know that I am a very good partisan fighter in partisan times. [Laughter and cheers.] And I trust you will find me equally as good a patriot when the country is in danger. [Cheers.]

Now permit me to say to the assembled Representatives and Senators of our beloved State, composed of men of both political parties, in my opinion it is your duty to lay aside, for the time being, your party creeds and party platforms; to dispense with your party organizations and partisan appeals; to forget that you were ever divided, until you have rescued the government and the country from their assailants. When this paramount duty shall have been performed, it will be proper for each of us to resume our respective political positions, according to our convictions of public duty. [Applause.] Give me a country first, that my children may live in peace; then we will have a theatre for our party organizations to operate upon.

Are we to be called upon to fold our arms, allow the national capital to be seized by a military force under a foreign revolutionary flag; to see the archives of the government in the hands of a people who affect to despise the flag and government of the United States? I am not willing to be expelled by military force, nor to fly from the Federal Capital. It has been my daily avocation, six months in the year, for eighteen years, to walk into that marble building, and from its portico to survey a prosperous, happy and united country on both sides of the Potomac. I believe I may with confidence appeal to the people of every section of the country to bear testimony that I have been as thoroughly national in my political opinions and action as any man that has lived in my day. [Applause.] And I believe if I should make an appeal to the people of the State of Illinois, or of the Northern States, for their impartial verdict, they would say that whatever errors I have committed have been in leaning too far to the southern section of the Union against my own. [Applause.] I think I can appeal to friend and foe: I use the term in a political sense, and I trust I use the word foe in a *past* sense. [Much applause.] I can appeal to them with confidence, that I have never pandered to the prejudice or passion of my section against the minority section of this Union; and I will say

to you now, with all frankness and in all sincerity, that I will never sanction nor acquiesce in any warfare whatever upon the constitutional rights or domestic institutions of the people of the Southern States. [Applause.] On the contrary, if there was an attempt to invade those rights—to stir up servile insurrection among their people—I would rush to their rescue, and interpose with whatever of strength I might possess to defend them from such a calamity. [Applause.] While I will never invade them—while I will never fail to defend and protect their rights to the full extent that a fair and liberal construction of the Constitution can give them—they must distinctly understand that I will never acquiesce in their invasion of our constitutional rights.

It is a crime against the inalienable and indefeasible right of every American citizen to attempt to destroy the government under which we were born. It is a crime against constitutional freedom and the hopes of the friends of freedom throughout the wide world to attempt to blot out the United States from the map of Christendom. Yet this attempt is now being made. The government of our fathers is to be overthrown and destroyed. The capital that bears the name of the Father of his Country is to be bombarded, and leveled to the earth among the rubbish and the dust of things that are past. The records of your government are to be scattered to the four winds of heaven. The constituted authorities, placed there by the same high authority that placed Washington, and Jefferson, and Madison, and Jackson in the chair, are to be captured and carried off, to become a by-word and a scorn to the nations of the world. [Never! never!]

You may think that I am drawing a picture that is overwrought. No man who has spent the last week in the city of Washington will believe that I have done justice to it. You have all the elements of the French Revolution surrounding the capital now, and threatening it with its terrors. Not only is our constitutional government to be stricken down; not only is our flag to be blotted out; but the very foundations of social order are to be undermined and destroyed; the demon of destruction is to be let loose over the face of the land, a reign of terror and mob law is to prevail in each section of the Union, and the man who dares to plead for the cause of justice and moderation in either section is to be marked down as a traitor to his section. If this state of things is allowed to go on, how long before you will have the guillotine in active operation?

I appeal to you, my countrymen—men of all parties—not to allow your passions to get the better of your judgments. Do not allow your vengeance upon the authors of this great iniquity to lead you into rash,

and cruel, and desperate acts upon loyal citizens who may differ with you in opinion. Let the spirit of moderation and of justice prevail. You cannot expect, within so few weeks after an excited political canvass, that every man can rise to the high and patriotic level of forgetting his partisan prejudices and sacrifice everything upon the altar of his country; but allow me to say to you, whom I have opposed and warred against with an energy you will respect, allow me to say to you, you will not be true to your country if you ever attempt to manufacture partisan capital out of the misfortunes of your country. [Much applause.] When calling upon Democrats to rally to the tented field, leaving wife, child, father and mother behind them to rush to the rescue of the President that you elected, do not make war upon them and try to manufacture partisan capital at their expense out of a struggle in which they are engaged from the holiest and purest of motives. [Renewed applause.]

Then I appeal to you, my own Democratic friends—those men that have never failed to rally under the glorious banner of the country, whenever an enemy, at home or abroad, has dared to assail it—to you with whom it has always been my pride to act—do not allow the mortification, growing out of defeat in a partisan struggle, and the elevation of a party to power that we firmly believed to be dangerous to the country—do not let that convert you from patriots into traitors to your native land. [Long continued applause.] Whenever our government is assailed—when hostile armies are marching, under new and odious banners against the government of our country, the shortest way to peace is the most stupendous and unanimous preparation for war. [Tremendous applause.] The greater the unanimity the less blood will be shed. [Much applause.] The more prompt and energetic the movement and the more imposing in numbers, the shorter will be the struggle.

Every friend of freedom—every champion and advocate of constitutional liberty throughout the land must feel that this cause is his own. There is and should be nothing disagreeable or humiliating to men who have differed, in times of peace, on every question that could divide fellow-men, to rally in concert in defence of the country and against all assailants. While all the States of this Union, and every citizen of every State has a priceless legacy dependent upon the success of our efforts to maintain this government, we in the great valley of the Mississippi have peculiar interests and inducements to the struggle. What is the attempt now being made? Seven States of this Union chose to declare that they will no longer obey the constitution of the United States, that they will withdraw from the government established by our fathers; that they will dissolve, without our consent, the bonds

that have united us together. But, not content with that, they proceed to invade and obstruct our dearest and most inalienable rights, secured by the constitution. One of their first acts is to establish a battery of cannon upon the banks of the Mississippi, on the dividing line between the States of Mississippi and Tennessee, and require every steamer that passes down the river to come to under their guns to receive a custom house officer on board, to prescribe where the boat may land, and upon what terms it may put out a barrel of flour or a cask of bacon.

We are called upon to sanction this policy. Before consenting to their right to commit such acts, I implore you to consider that the same principle which will allow the cotton States to exclude us from the ports of the gulf, would authorize the New England States and New York and Pennsylvania to exclude us from the Atlantic, and the Pacific States to exclude us from the ports of that ocean. Whenever you sanction this doctrine of secession, you authorize the States bordering upon the Atlantic and Pacific Oceans to withdraw from us, form alliances among themselves, and exclude us from the markets of the world and from communication with all the rest of Christendom. Not only this, but there follows a tariff on imports, levying taxes upon every pound of tea and coffee and sugar, and every yard of cloth that we may import for our consumption; the levying, too, of an export duty upon every bushel of corn and every pound of meat we may choose to send to the markets of the world to pay for our imports.

Bear in mind that these very cotton States, who in former times have been so boisterous in their demands for free trade, have, among their first acts, established an export duty on cotton for the first time in American history.

It is a historical fact, well known to every man who has read the debates of the Convention which framed the constitution, that the Southern States refused to become parties to the constitution unless there was an express provision in the constitution prohibiting Congress to levy an export duty on any product of the country. No sooner have these cotton States seceded than an export duty is levied; and if they will levy it on their own cotton do you not think they will levy it on our pork, and our beef, and our corn, and our wheat, and our manufactured articles and all we have to sell? Then what is the proposition? It is to enable the tier of States bordering on the Atlantic and the Pacific, and on the Gulf, surrounding us on all sides, to withdraw from our Union—form alliances among themselves and then levy taxes on us without our consent and collect revenue without giving us any just proportion or any portion of the amount collected. Can we submit to taxation without representation? [Several voices “no.”] Can we permit nations foreign to us to collect revenues off our products—the fruits of our industry? I ask the citizens of Illinois—I ask every citizen in the great basin between the Rocky Mountains and the Alleghanies, in the valleys of the Ohio, Mississippi and Missouri to tell me whether he is willing to sanction a line of policy that may isolate us from the markets of the world and make us dependent provinces upon powers that thus choose to surround and hem us in? [Many voices “no,” and “never.”]

I warn you, my countrymen, whenever you permit this to be done in the Southern States, New York will very soon follow their example. New York—that great port, where two-thirds of all our revenue is collected, and whence two-thirds of our products are exported, will not long be able to resist the temptation of taxing fifteen millions of people in the great West when she can monopolize the resources and release her own people thereby from any taxation whatsoever. Hence I say to you, my countrymen, from the best consideration I have been able to give to this subject, after the most mature reflection and thorough investigation, I have arrived at the conclusion that, come what may, war, if it must be, although I deplore it as a great calamity, yet, come what may, the people of the Mississippi Valley can never consent to be excluded from free access to the ports of the Atlantic, the Pacific and the Gulf of Mexico. [Great applause.]

Hence, I repeat that while I am not prepared to take up arms or to sanction war upon the rights of the Southern States; upon their domestic institutions; upon their rights of person or property, but, on the contrary, would rush to their defense and protect them from assault, I will never cease to urge my countrymen to take up arms and to fight to the death in defense of our indefeasible rights. [Long continued applause.] Hence, if a war does come, it will be a war of self defense on our part. It will be a war in defense of our own just rights; in defense of the government which we have inherited as a priceless legacy from our patriotic fathers; in defense of those great rights of the freedom of trade, commerce, transit and intercourse from the center to the circumference of our great continent. These are rights we can never surrender.

I have struggled almost against hope to avert the calamities of war and to effect a re-union and reconciliation with our brethren of the South. I yet hope it may be done, but I am not able to point out to you how it may be effected. Nothing short of Providence can reveal to us the issue of this great struggle. Bloody—calamitous—I fear it will be. May we so conduct it if a collision must come, that we will stand justified in the eyes of Him who knows our hearts, and who will judge our every act. We must not yield to resentments, nor to the spirit of vengeance, much less to the desire for conquest or ambition.

I see no path of ambition open in a bloody struggle for triumph over my own countrymen. There is no path for ambition open for me in a divided country, after having so long served a united and glorious country. Hence, whatever we may do must be the result of conviction, of patriotic duty—the duty that we owe to ourselves, to our posterity, and to the friends of constitutional liberty and self-government throughout the world. [Loud applause.]

My friends, I can say no more. To discuss these topics is the most painful duty of my life. It is with a sad heart—with a grief that I have never before experienced, that I have to contemplate this fearful struggle; but I believe in my conscience that it is a duty we owe ourselves and our children, and our God, to protect this Government and that flag from every assailant, be he who he may. [Tremendous and prolonged applause.]

On motion of Mr. Hacker, the House adjourned.





